



American Citizen Bulletin June 2011

JULY 4 HOLIDAY CLOSING

American Citizens Services will be closed on Monday, July 4, in commemoration of Independence Day.

NEED TO VERIFY YOUR NEW PASSPORT NUMBER FOR A BANK OR REAL ESTATE OFFICE?

When you receive a new passport, the number in that new passport is different from the number of your previous passport. This differs from Chinese passports, in which the passport number remains unchanged. As a result, U.S. citizens at times experience difficulties with their banks when they present the new passport.

To address this problem, the Embassy now offers a new document that states your previous passport number has been replaced by your current passport number. A notarial fee of \$50, or the RMB equivalent, applies to this service. Make a notarial appointment for this service on our website and, if possible, bring your old passport with you to the appointment.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO RECEIVE A NEW PASSPORT? CAN THAT BE EXPEDITED?

Because of the security features of U.S. passports, full validity U.S. passports are all printed in the United States. U.S. embassies and consulates cannot print U.S. passports. As a result, it takes a minimum of ten days to receive a new passport when applying overseas.

When you apply at the Embassy for a new passport, we electronically send your passport application to a Passport Center in the United States. The Passport Center prints the book and sends it by FedEx to the Embassy. Upon receipt of your passport, we email you to let you know it is ready for pickup. The process is as streamlined as possible and cannot be expedited further.

If you do have an emergency and cannot wait ten days for a new passport, the Embassy can issue you a temporary, limited-validity passport. This limited validity passport is much thinner than the full-validity passport, and does not contain the important security features of the larger book. It is only valid for the length of your emergency trip.

CHANGES AFFECTING THE CHINESE VISA APPLICATION PROCESS

On January 1, the Chinese embassies and consulates in the United States and elsewhere in the world started using a new visa application form; the old version can be used until June 30. Note

that the form changes only apply to applications for entry visas issued at Chinese embassies and consulates. The forms used at the PSB Entry/Exit Bureau in China for the extension or renewal of visas will not change.

Applicants must print the double-sided form after downloading. Fill in the form clearly and completely according to the instructions. Visit the Chinese Embassy in the United States' [website](#) for more information regarding the updated forms.

SUMMER TRAVEL TO TIBET

American Citizens Services has received reports that foreign citizens are not receiving approval to travel to the Tibet Autonomous Region this summer. Although the Embassy has not received any official confirmation of this policy, if you are planning to travel to Tibet, we recommend you check with the permit issuing travel agents about any possible restrictions.

JUNE (and other) WEDDINGS

Marriages in China are administered by the Marriage Registration Office of the Civil Affairs Bureau (*Minzheng Ju*) of each province. The appropriate Civil Affairs Office will be the one in the jurisdiction in which the Chinese citizen is registered (the location of their *hukou*), and persons planning to marry should visit or call that office for specific information.

The Civil Affairs Office will ascertain that both parties are of minimum marriageability age (generally 22 for men and 20 for women, although a higher minimum may be established by the local Civil Affairs Office) and that both parties are single and otherwise free to marry. Persons who have been married previously will be asked to submit original or certified copies of final divorce or annulment decrees, or of death certificates, if widowed. The U.S. citizen partner to a marriage in China will generally be asked to submit the following:

- A valid U.S. passport with valid Chinese visa (If both parties are foreigners, one side should present a Chinese residence permit);
- An "affidavit of marriageability" in which the U.S. citizen swears or affirms before a Consul that he or she is legally eligible to marry. (You can make an appointment on the Embassy website to schedule this affidavit. Some marriage registration offices may require a Chinese translation of the affidavit.);
- If a previous marriage ended in divorce or death, a photocopy of the divorce decree or death certificate;
- Three photos (5 x 3.8 cm) of the marrying couple, taken together; and
- A registration fee (currently RMB 9 for two certificates).

Inquiries on what the Chinese partner must submit to the marriage office should be directed to the local marriage registration office (*Hunying Dengji Chu*). Normally, marriage certificate are issued by the Marriage Registration Office of the Bureau of Civil Affairs on the same day. American diplomatic and consular officers do not have the authority to perform marriages of American citizens. Marriages that are legal in China are also legal in the United States. It is

not necessary to re-marry or otherwise register your Chinese marriage in the United States to make it valid.

APPLYING FOR AN IMMIGRANT VISA TO THE UNITED STATES FOR YOUR CHINESE SPOUSE

A U.S. citizen who marries a Chinese citizen may file an immigrant visa petition on behalf of his or her non-U.S. citizen spouse. Citizens living in Fujian, Guangdong, Guangxi, and Hainan provinces should file their immigrant relative petitions with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) office at the U.S. Consulate General in Guangzhou; all others should file with the USCIS office at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing. Please be aware only couples intending to reside in the United States long term should file. For more information about the process, go to www.uscis.gov.